Public meeting script

- My name is Katie Siegel. I work for the United States Environmental Protection Agency's regional office in Chicago. I am the manager for our air monitoring and air toxics program.
- I am really grateful to be able to be part of this meeting tonight and hear from southeast side community members. I am a proud Chicago native. Growing up, my grammar school was in the same league as Annunciata, not too far from the proposed RMG site, and I have fond memories of playing basketball in the gym there.

- I'm here to give a high-level overview of a recently-released EPA air monitoring report. It was released on October 21, 2021. If you haven't read it already, I encourage you to visit the URL in the chat.

- EPA began our analysis of air monitoring data last April.
    - We conducted this analysis because we wanted a data-driven approach to understand air trends in this community.
    - A gold-standard regulatory air monitoring site operates at George Washington High School, not far from the proposed RMG site.
        - The site monitors particulate matter, sometimes known as PM or soot. It collects data about two types of PM—bigger particles known as coarse or PM10 and smaller particles known as fine or PM2.5.
            - Some particulates are emitted directly from sources, such as construction sites, unpaved roads, fields, smokestacks, or fires. Other particulates form after they react with other pollutants.
            - We care about particulate matter because scientific studies show it can harm peoples' health. Large segments of the U.S. population, including children, people with heart or lung conditions, and people of color, are at risk of health effects from PM2.5.
        - The site also monitors several metals, like lead and manganese.
            - We care about metals because they can also have health impacts.
            - For example, lead exposure can cause cognitive impacts in children.

- This report is just one input into the City of Chicago's health impact assessment.
    - A main reason for this is that monitoring data has its limitations and our report discusses them in more detail.
    - As you've heard from the other presenters, the HIA will assess other environmental impacts and information on population vulnerability, including public health data.
    - EPA's report is neither a full evaluation of impacts in this community nor a disparate impact analysis.

- Next, I want to turn to some of the report's key findings.
    - Concentrations of pollutants measured at George Washington High School:
        - have either decreased or remained the same over the past 10 years
        - have either decreased or remained the same—with the exception of coarse particulate matter—over the past 3 years
            - we are currently investigating potential reasons for this increase in PM10

- Over the last 10 years, annual averages of all metals—like lead and manganese—have been below the long-term health benchmarks

- I also want to spend a minute going through how to interpret the chart on this slide. There are several charts like this in the report.
  - The blue dots are each daily PM2.5 reading collected at George Washington High School over the past ten years.
  - The orange line is the trend line. As you can see, the trend for PM2.5 is decreasing over the past ten years.
  - The green line is EPA's national standard for PM2.5. As you can see, the trend line is below the standard.

- You may be wondering how values measured at George Washington High School compare to other parts of Chicago, so we looked at where we have other operating monitors and how they stack up:
  - When we look at short-term or daily values of fine particulate matter, Southeast Chicago is tied for the highest
  - When we look at longer-term or annual values of fine particulate matter, Southeast Chicago is in the middle (6^{th} highest out of 12)
  - When we look at longer-term or annual values of coarse particulate matter Southeast Chicago is in the middle (2^{nd} highest out of 3)

- I also want to talk about some special monitoring that EPA required, not at George Washington High School, but at facilities that handle manganese. The most recent 12-month rolling averages of manganese near facilities are all below the long-term health benchmark.
  - These reductions in manganese pollution are a result of EPA enforcement efforts and the City's bulk handling ordinance.
  - We are continuing these efforts. Since this spring, my counterparts in the air enforcement program have conducted over 60 inspections on the southeast side. There is no other neighborhood in the Midwest where this has happened.
  - We invite community advocates to give us additional feedback on where else we should inspect.

- Wrapping up, I want to leave you with a few key takeaways.
  - EPA's report uses a data-driven approach to understand air monitoring trends in the community. If you haven't looked at it yet, I encourage you to do so.
  - Remember, EPA's report is just one input into the HIA. As you're hearing tonight, the HIA will assess other environmental impacts and information on population vulnerability.
  - And, last but not least, EPA will continue to engage with the community and partners on improving air quality. While much progress has been made, EPA recognizes that there is still more work to be done. That's why we have been conducting inspections in the community, for example. Thank you for your time tonight and know that EPA is excited to partner with all of you to continue to improve air quality in your community.

- This might seem like an obvious point, but our analysis is limited to the pollutants that are measured at George Washington High School. It does not include any analysis of volatile organic carbons, for example.
- Another is that meeting all air quality standards and having monitored values below health benchmarks does not preclude areas with levels of air pollution higher than shown at monitoring sites.